THE Bishop of SARUM's CHARGE TO THE CLERGY of his Diocese, AT HIS Primary Visitation, ANNO 1716.

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Dr William Talbot. K
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AT HIS
Primary Visitation
ANNO, 1716.

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A

Second Visitation

OF THE

DIOCESE

OF

OXFORD

TO THE

ARCHDEACONRY

OF

BERKS

To the Reverend
The CLERGY
OF THE
Diocese of *SARUM.*

THE obliging Manner, in which ſeveral of You, My Reverend Brethren, have requeſted Me to Publiſh the Charge which I gave at my Primary Viſitation, has given Me an Opportunity of gratifying a Deſire of my own, which I have had ſince that Time, of acknowledging the true Satisfaction which I took in that Reſpectful and Affectionate Reception which I then met with from you all, which I look upon as a promiſing Omen, that my future Labours will not be loſt among you, but that we ſhall carry on the Work of our Common Lord with that Unanimity and Love, which are abſolutely neceſſary to make it proſper in our Hands.

I have another View in ſending this plain Diſcourſe to the Preſs; I have endeavour'd in it to touch upon moſt of the common Subjects of an ordinary Viſi-

tation-Charge: And as you may now have it always by you, it may ſave a good deal of Time, which may be uſefully employ'd to other Purpoſes, if God ſhall ſpare Me to meet you again upon the like Occaſion.

Mutual good Wiſhes being the Cuſtomary Salutations on this Day, give me leave to tell you what I promiſe Myſelf from You, and what I heartily wiſh for You.

That which I promiſe Myſelf from You is, That you ſtrive together with Me in your Prayers to God for Me, that he whoſe Strength is perfected in Weakneſs, *would ſo aſſiſt the Meaneſt of his Servants with his Grace,* that I may know how to behave my ſelf as I ought to do in the Houſe of God, which is the Church of the living God.

That which I wiſh for You is, That you may ſo take heed to your ſelves and to your Flocks, to your Doctrine and Miniſtry, that you may both ſave your own Souls and theirs that hear you; and that you may be my Joy and Crown of Rejoycing in the preſence of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt at his coming.

This is not only the Wiſh of this Day, but ſhall be the conſtant Prayer of,

Your Truly Affectionate Brother,

And Servant (in Chriſt)

LONDON, New-Years-Day, 1717.

W. SARUM.

My Reverend Brethren,

THE Meetings of Bishops with their Clergy, since the Act of Submission in *Henry* the Eighth's Time, being no longer what they sometime were, Diocesan Synods, for the making of Constitutions, (which did oblige within their respective Jurisdictions) but now only executive Visitations, in order to the better Observation of those that are made, the Business of them is only, *First*, To enquire into the past Behaviour of those that are concern'd to obey them, for the Correction and Reformation of what has been amiss. And, *Secondly*, To suggest such Directions and Motives, as may help and perswade them to a more careful discharge of their Duties for the future.

The former of these I have in some measure done, in causing Articles of Enquiry to be transmitted to You; and upon the Returns which shall be made

made thereto, will proceed to that which ſhall be farther incumbent on Me in that reſpect.

As to the latter, which is my preſent Buſineſs, *Firſt*, I ſhall lay before you a general Idea of your Office, as it is repreſented in the Scriptures, together with the particular Parts and Branches of it, as they are required from you by the Conſtitution of our Church. And,

Secondly, I ſhall ſuggeſt ſome Motives to excite you to a conſcientious and zealous diſcharge of your Office, and the ſeveral Particulars of it, whether they relate to Yourſelves, or to the People committed to you, whether they are to be performed in the Church or out of it.

But before I proceed any further, it may be neceſſary for me to obviate a too common but unreaſonable Miſconſtruction of Diſcourſes of this Nature, as if they were Reflections upon our Church and Clergy, as ſuppoſing them generally guilty of thoſe Faults, againſt which we caution them, or neglectful of thoſe Duties, to which we adviſe them.

But when St. *Paul* wrote his Epiſtles to *Timothy* and *Titus*, did he make Satyrs upon the Clergy? When he ſaid a *Biſhop muſt be Vigilant, of good Behaviour, given to Hoſpitality, apt to Teach, Juſt, Holy, Temperate; that the Deacons muſt be Grave, holding the Myſtery of Faith in a pure Conſcience, ruling their Children and their own Houſes well*: that the former *muſt*

not

not to be given to Wine, no Strikers, not Greedy of filthy Lucre; should it be concluded from thence, that the Bishops and Deacons generally were, or that the Apostle's Advice implyed they were Drunkards and Fighters, false, negligent of their Duties, and intent only upon their Profit?

Surely such an Inference would have been very unjust: Far be it therefore from any ones Thoughts to conclude, as it is from mine to intend, when I shall recommend any Duty, or caution you against any Vice, that you are failing in the one, or chargeable with the other.

No, my Brethren, *I am perswaded better things of you, and things that accompany Salvation, though I thus speak.*

After all, if there are some among Us, that do not act suitably to their Holy Profession, but are Reproaches to it; (as indeed, considering the degeneracy of Humane Nature, it can hardly be expected it should be otherwise) who are the worst of Men here, and will be the most miserable hereafter; yet certainly it ought not to be a greater Reflection on our Church, that of so great a Number of her Sons all are not Saints, than it was upon the Glorious Company of the Apostles, that of so few one was a Devil.

To

To go on then to the Consideration of our Holy Function, which is represented in Scripture under several figurative Expressions; as that we are *Stewards of the Mysteries of God*, *Ambassadors for Christ*, *his Soldiers and Watchmen*, *Labourers in the Lord's Vineyard and Harvest*, *Shepherds to feed and look after his Flock*, &c.

Now these Characters set forth the great Honour and Dignity of our Office, that we are Ministers, Servants to the great King of Kings, the God of Heaven; we act by his Commissions, we are his Ambassadors to treat with Men about Reconciliation, Ambassadors for Christ, (*as though God did beseech you by us*) in his room and stead, to transact that great Affair, which he came down from Heaven to negotiate; and Us he has committed the Care and Government of his Household, his Children, his Purchase, which he bought *not with corruptible things, as Silver and Gold, but with his own most precious Blood*. So that if the Greatness of our Master, who gives us our Characters and Authority, or the Importance of the Business, with which he has entrusted us, can render an Office venerable, ours is so; and consequently their Behaviour is very unjustifiable, who can treat those that are vested with it, with Rudeness and Contempt. But let them look to it, the Affronts they offer to Us reach to Him from whom we received our Commission, *He that despises you despises me*, says our Saviour. And it is not without

reason

reason, that he has declared himself jealous of the Honour of his Servants, not only because his own is concern'd in theirs, but the Business he has committed to them depends very much upon it; for Religion can never be supported, when the Ministers of it become contemptible, it must sink with their Reputation; nor can any Reverence for that be preserved longer than a just Respect and Deference is paid to them.

But how is that Respect to be secured? Why, in some measure it is in our own power to do it. So surely St. *Paul* thought, when writing to the *Timothy*, he says, *Let no Man despise thy Youth*; and to *Titus*, *Let no Man despise thee*. Let no Man despise me! Why, have I the Judgments and Opinions of other Men at my command and disposal? Yes, so far I have, that I will venture to affirm, that whoever answers his Character, and acts suitably to the Dignity of it, shall not only command Respect from all wise and good Men, but even bad Men, whatever they may pretend outwardly, to shew their little Wit, or to serve some base End, must, whenever they are serious, have inwardly a secret Esteem for them.

But then these Characters, as they carry a great deal of Dignity and Honour in them, so they require much Industry, Zeal and Courage, much Faithfulness and Sincerity to come up to them; The Life of a Soldier, a Watchman, a Shepherd,

a Labourer, are not Lives of Eaſe and Softneſs; they have much Buſineſs to do, Employment for their whole Time, and conſtant Duty to be upon.

A Steward muſt be honeſt and faithful to his Lord, and to his Family; an Ambaſſador muſt be careful to purſue his Inſtructions, and wholly intent upon obtaining the End of his Embaſſy, and muſt not through Negligence, Miſtake, Treachery or Cowardice, betray the Intereſt of his Prince.

To ſpeak without a Figure, it is much, my Brethren, that we have to do; our great and main Buſineſs is to ſave Souls, and in order thereto to acquaint Men with, and engage them to the performance of the Conditions of the New Covenant, on which their Salvation depends; to promote Holineſs and Virtue in the World, and extirpate Vice and Prophaneneſs out of it; but this is not to be done without great Reſolution, great Application, and great Conduct and Prudence. You ſee then your Calling, Brethren, in the general, the Dignity and Honour, the Weight and Importance, the Labour and Difficulties of it.

Give me leave to lay ſome Particulars of it very briefly before you. And,

Firſt, That I may ſpeak in the Apoſtle's Method and Words, you are *to look, to take heed to your ſelves*; without this, all your other Endeavours will turn to ſmall account. *Look to your ſelves and to your Flock*, ſays St. *Paul* to the Elders whom he

conven'd

conven'd at *Miletus*; to your ſelves firſt, or there will be little hopes you ſhould look to the Flock. He that neglects his own Soul, is very unfit to be truſted with the Care of the Souls of others, very unlikely to be more ſollicitous about theirs.

Take heed, ſays the ſame Apoſtle to *Timothy*, *to thy ſelf and unto thy Doctrine*; unto thy ſelf again firſt, or thy Preaching will have little effect. How coldly and faintly muſt a Man recommend or preſs any Vertue or Duty upon his Hearers, which he neither loves nor practiſes himſelf?

With what face can he explode a Vice in a Sermon, who gives a Countenance to it by his Life? His Conſcience, if he conſiders, muſt fly in his Face, and if he be not paſt all Shame, cover him with the greateſt Confuſion. And what a miſerable effect is this like to have upon the People, who will be too likely, not only to be drawn by his Example to do as he does, but to make Inferences from his Doctrine and Life compared together, to the prejudice of Religion. They will conclude, ſurely this Man does not believe himſelf what he teaches us; Religion is not ſo ſevere a thing as he pretends; it allows of greater Liberties than he thinks it convenient for us to know, for elſe he would not take them himſelf. It is his Buſineſs to ſtudy Religion, and no doubt he underſtands it better than we do; and therefore however he preſſes upon us a pure and holy Life, upon pain of Damnation, yet

ſince he lives a wicked and ſinful one himſelf, there's no queſtion he knows he may be ſaved for all that; and why may not we too?

As then we would not be guilty of deſtroying thoſe Souls for whom Chriſt died, of bringing Contempt upon Religion, and expoſing it for a meer Trick and Politick Contrivance, we muſt be careful not to contradict our Doctrine by our Examples, but to make our Lives a Comment upon our Sermons, and to live over in the Week, what we preach on the Sunday.

Next to our Moral, we ſhould labour after Intellectual Improvements, by diligent ſtudy; *by giving attendance unto reading*, eſpecially *the Holy Scriptures, which are profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs*, and which, if thoroughly underſtood, will ſufficiently furniſh the *Man of God*, the Miniſter of the Goſpel, for the diſcharge of his whole Duty. The reading of the Scriptures therefore, with ſuch Studies as may help him to the better underſtanding of them himſelf, and the clearer explaining them to others, ſhould be the main Employment of thoſe Hours, which are not taken up in performing other parts of his Office. On theſe he ſhould meditate, give himſelf wholly to them, and continue in them; and in ſo doing, *looking to himſelf* firſt, and then *to his Doctrine*, he may hope to *ſave himſelf, and thoſe that hear him.*

Such a one makes way for his Doctrine, prepares an ddiſpoſes his People to receive it; they are convinc'd that he is in earneſt with them; that he intends their good, by giving them no other Directions than what he follows himſelf; they ſee there are no Impoſſibilities requir'd, or inſuperable Difficulties in the ways of Religion; for their Miniſter practiſes himſelf, what he preſſes upon them, and goes before them in all the Paths he adviſes them to walk in. In ſhort, an exemplary Life, a regular, prudent and uſeful Converſation, gives Authority to a Clergyman, adds Weight to his Doctrine, makes him obſerv'd and rever'd by his People, in his Miniſtration of the ſeveral Offices and Duties he is to perform to them; which I am in the next place to ſpeak to.

And the firſt is reading the Prayers of the Church, which you are oblig'd to do, not only upon *Sundays* and *Holy Days*, but upon *Wedneſdays* and *Fridays* Weekly; and if the Wiſh in the 15th Canon could have effect, That every Houſholder dwelling within half a Mile of the Church, would come or ſend one at leaſt of his Houſhold, fit to joyn with the Miniſter, thither upon thoſe Days, the pretence of want of a Congregation would be over in moſt places.

And certainly that at leaſt would be comply'd with, if you made your People ſenſible how indiſpenſible a Duty the joyning in Publick Prayers is,

and

and what an excellent Form, notwithstanding all the Cavils that have been made against it, we of this Church are blest with, to possess them with a due value for which, it will contribute very much if you read the Prayers,

1. Intirely, not mangling them, and leaving out part of what is appointed to be read.

2. Regularly, in the Method prescrib'd, not changing the Order according to your Humour and Fancy.

3. Leisurely and deliberately, not hastening through them, with that Precipitancy, as if you minded nothing so much as to have them over. And,

4. *Lastly*, Devoutly and Affectionately, that it may appear your Souls are warm'd by them, and your Hearts go along with them; such a performance will do Justice to them, and recommend them to all that are not very unreasonably prejudiced against them.

Secondly, After the Prayers follows Preaching, in relation to which I shall hint only two things, as to the Subjects which you should choose, and the Method in which you should handle them.

1. The Subjects should generally be Practical; the handling of Controversial Points does not often do service in ordinary Congregations; and the entering into the abstruser Mysteries of our Religion, especially attempting to explain them, frequently does

does Mischief. We should consider, that the design of Preaching, is not to fill Mens Heads with Speculations, but to direct their Practice, to inform them of their Duty, and perswade them to perform it.

2. As to Method and Style, I think the World is generally grown so judicious, as to be weary of fanciful Divisions, and shredding of a Subject into minute parts, of vain Ostentation of reading Quotations in the learned Languages, affected Phrases, jingling of Words, and witty Turns. A grave and sober Style will ever be acceptable; 'tis not necessary that a Discourse must be flat, if it be not frothy. There may be true Life and Spirit in plain and unaffected Compositions, and we have sufficient proof of this in Volumes of Sermons printed in our own Language. That is the best Style, which does most clearly convey our sense to our Hearers, and that the best Method, that most effectually helps them to retain it.

3. The next part of your Duty I shall lay before you is Catechizing, the instructing the Children and ignorant Persons of your Parish in the Principles or first Rudiments of Religion; without doing this, all your attempts to build them up in their Holy Faith, is like raising a Superstructure, without first laying a Foundation.

By Catechising I do not mean only hearing them repeat the Words of the Church Catechism, but

but making them understand them. As for the younger sort, the first beginners, it may be of use to break the longer Answers into several short Questions, by which you will try whether they repeat the Words only by rote, and without any Understanding. But for others that are more advanced, a further Examination of them will be needful; and that they may be able to give you a good account, you should spend half an hour at a time in an easie Discourse upon the several Questions and Answers, or parts of them, as they lie in order in the Catechism.

There are very good helps to be had for those that need them, from the Expositions of several of our Divines, and the Subject I am sure is copious enough, taking the Doctrine of the New Covenant, both the Promises and Blessings made over to us by God when we were admitted into it, and the Conditions vow'd and undertaken by us or in our Names, both the things to be avoided, the things to be believed, and the things to be practised by us, together with the means by which we are to seek, and thro' which we may receive the assistance of Divine Grace to enable us to make good our Conditions: And this will bring me to speak of,

4. The Sacraments you are to administer. As to Baptism, I shall say no more than just desire you to observe your Rubrick, which positively requires that

that it be publickly administred in the Church, unless where need inforces it to be otherwise, and when such Necessity happens, when a Child is so weak that it cannot with safety be brought to Church, and in danger of dying unbaptized, then the Church allows it to be baptised at Home, but then she has appointed a particular Office for that purpose, and expects, if the Child lives, it should be brought and received into the Congregation, and committed to the Charge of the Godfathers.

As to the other Sacrament, that of the Lord's Supper, the Church has not particularly said, how often it should be administred. She has order'd that it shall be so often, that every Parishioner may Communicate at least three times in a Year; but surely never intended to limit them to three times only. How do you bring your People frequently to the Sacrament, if you should, as you find occasion, bestow whole Discourses upon that Subject, to rectifie their Mistakes, and remove their Prejudices, and give them just Apprehensions of the Nature and Design of it? You should press upon them the Obligations that they are under often to receive it, out of Duty to Christ, who has peremptorily commanded it, out of Love and Gratitude to him, who instituted it, to keep up in them the Memory of his unparallel'd Love and Mercy in suffering his Body to be broken, and his Blood to be shed upon the Cross for the Redemption of lost Mankind, out of

Kindneſs and Charity to their own Souls, that they may frequently receive thoſe Supplies of Spiritual Aid and Comfort, of which they do ſo often ſtand in need.

But then you ſhould withal poſſeſs them with ſuch a due Reverence for it, that they preſume not to come unpreparedly to it, but that they ſeriouſly endeavour to work in themſelves ſuch Diſpoſitions and Affections as are ſuitable to the deſign and ends of the Ordinance; that they may commemorate their Lord's Sufferings with Love to him that underwent them, and Hatred to their Sins that occaſion'd them; that they may renew their Covenant with deep Sorrow for their former breaches of it, and ſincere Reſolutions of a more faithful performance for the future; and that they may come for the Communications of God's Grace, and Pledges of his Love, with that earneſt Deſire and humble Confidence that their own Needs and the ſenſe of his Faithfulneſs may juſtly give them.

To theſe Ends it would be well, if as often as you give notice of a Sacrament, you required from the people the obſervation of the firſt Rubrick in the Communion Office, that ſuch of them as intend to receive, ſhould ſend in their Names to you beforehand, that if there be need for it, you may adviſe and aſſiſt any of thoſe that are fit to be admitted, and reject thoſe that are not.

These are the chiefest and most ordinary parts of your Duties in the Church; but there are further Duties required from you towards the people out of the Church; and surely that Minister that thinks if he duly performs the Publick Offices in the Church at the stated Times of Worship, he discharges all that belongs to his Function, has a very mistaken Notion of it, and is like to do but little Service in it. Our Saviour gives it as one Character of a good Shepherd, *that he knows his Sheep, and is known of them, and calleth them by name*, is exactly acquainted with the state of every one of his Flock, and applies himself particularly to each, as their respective Circumstances require; this St. *Paul* tells the Elders at *Miletus* was his practice, that he taught them *not only Publickly, but from House to House, and ceased not to warn every one Day and Night with Tears.* And this, my Brethren, is what every one of you sacredly promis'd to do at your Admission into Priests Orders, to *use both publick and private Monitions and Exhortations, as well to the Sick as to the Whole within your Cure.*

As to the Sick, I hope you will not defer visiting them till you are sent for, I know not what foolish Fancy too often prevailing with persons to put off sending for their Minister, till there is little Service to be done for them; but go to them as soon as you hear of any that are ill, and when you are with them, think it not enough to read over the

Office to them, though that is very good, but enquire into the particular state of their Souls, and press them to lay it freely open to you, and deal faithfully with them, by rebuking or exhorting, humbling or comforting, laying the Threats or the Promises of the Gospel before, and applying your selves suitably to them, accordingly as their Cases respectively require.

At those times when Death seems approaching, and they have a nearer prospect of Eternity, Men are generally more apt to consider and hearken to Advice, and more capable of Impressions, than at others; then it is, that after having made them sensible of the Folly of a wicked Life, and Misery of an impenitent Death, you should get from them serious Promises of living soberly, righteously and godly, if they shall recover, which you may afterwards, as you have occasion, put them in mind of, this will give you great advantage ever after in your Applications to them.

But your Care out of the Church is not to be confin'd to the Sick only, but must extend to the whole Flock, whom I earnestly desire you frequently to visit from House to House. I know not any one thing I can recommend to you, that is so likely to make your Ministry successful. Your Discourses in the Church must be general, nor can you apply them there to every particular person; but by going from Family to Family, you may

 make

make your ſelves acquainted with the Condition of every Individual, and apply yourſelves ſuitably to them: And in order to make way for your Spiritual Advice to reach their Hearts, you will do well to get into their Affections, by offering them any Help and Aſſiſtance, and Friendly Office that you can do them as to their Temporal Concerns; and if they be poor, by ſuch charitable Diſtributions to them, as their Neceſſities call for, and your Abilities will allow you to make.

But beſides thoſe of your own Communion, there may be ſome in your Pariſhes that diſſent from it; with theſe you ſhould often confer, and endeavour to make them ſenſible of their Error, and recover them from it *in the Spirit of Meekneſs*. Avoid all hard Language and bitter Reflections, either before their Faces or behind their Backs; no Man was ever convinced by being call'd ill Names, or by any bad Uſage; it is a bad Cauſe that ſtands in need of ſuch Methods to defend it; yours I am ſure wants it not, nor does indeed allow of it; treat them with Love and Gentleneſs, make them friendly Viſits at their Houſes, and receive them kindly at yours; ſatisfie them that you intend nothing but their good, that what you do towards them proceeds from a principle of Conſcience, they living within the Limits of your Pariſhes, you think yourſelves obliged in Charity to their Souls, to endeavour to recover them from the unhappy

Separation

Separation in which they are engaged, and to bring them back to your Flock. Tell them, that though the Act of Indulgence has indeed remitted the Civil Punishments, yet the obligation of Conscience to preserve the Peace, and not break the Unity of the Church, still remains: And if there be any principle of Church-Communion, this is one, that in whatever Church God's Providence has placed me, if that Church enjoyns no sinful Terms of Communion, I am obliged in Conscience to communicate with that Church; desire them to consider seriously whether our Church enjoyns any thing upon their Faith or Practice, which God has forbidden, or wants any thing that he has made necessary to Salvation; desire them to instance in the Particulars, and shew from the Scriptures, that the thing they complain of is there made sinful, or that which they apprehend we want, is there necessarily enjoyn'd; and if they cannot do this, as I am very sure they cannot, ask them whether since they cannot prove it to be a Sin to communicate with Us, they must not acknowledge it to be a Sin to separate from Us. Let them know, that prejudice of Education, Humour and Fancy, the gratifying an itching Ear, having Mens Persons in Admiration, and such like, will be very bad Pleas for disturbing the Peace of the Church, rending the Body of Christ, and making way by such Divisions for the common Enemy of the Reformed Religion

ligion to subvert and destroy that Church which is the great, the chiefest Bulwark of it.

There are two or three other things which do not come properly under any of the Heads of which I have been treating, but which I must mention to you, and require you to act cautiously and conscientiously in them.

One is the giving of Titles to Persons to qualifie them for Orders, which I expect you should never do, but when you intend *bonâ fide* to employ them.

The Second is signing of Testimonials for Persons that come to be Ordain'd, or instituted into Livings; which certainly is a matter of that Weight and Consequence which ought not to be done inconsiderately, out of a Complement, or fear of disobliging. A great deal depends upon it; a Man that is corrupted in his Morals, is likely to do more hurt in the Church, than one that is deficient in Learning and Knowledge. We cannot be supposed to have personal Knowledge of every Man that comes to us for Orders or Institution; we can examine them as to their Parts and Learning, but must generally depend upon the Testimonials they bring for the Probity of their Lives and Manners; and if we should happen to admit any immoral or wicked Person, those must be answerable for the ill Consequences of it, that sign'd Testimonials in his favour.

I beſeech you conſider ſeriouſly of this, *to be Partakers of other Mens Sins*; we have every one of us Sins enough of our own to anſwer for, and need not increaſe the Charge, by intituling ourſelves to anſwer for other Mens.

The Third is a matter wherein you and the Churchwardens are concern'd, and that is, the admitting of Strangers to preach in your Churches; as to which I have too much reaſon to give you a Caution at this time; if you lend your Pulpits to any that you do not know, you may ſuffer one in Popiſh Orders, or in no Orders, to poiſon your People with their Superſtitious or Factious Doctrines; to prevent which Miſchief, the 50th Canon enjoyns, "That neither Miniſter, Churchwarden, nor any "other Officer of the Church, ſhall ſuffer any "Man to preach within their Churches or Chapels, "but ſuch, as by ſhewing their Licence to preach, "ſhall appear to them to be ſufficiently authorized "thereto. And the 52d Canon provides, That "the Churchwardens and Sidesmen ſhall ſee that "the Names of all Preachers which come to their "Church from any other place, be noted in a Book "which they ſhall have ready for that purpoſe, "wherein every Preacher ſhall ſubſcribe his Name, "the Day when he preach'd, and the Biſhop of "whom he had Licenſe to preach. And I require from you the ſtrict obſervance of thoſe Canons.

I shall add but one thing more by way of Advice, and that is, that you would frequently read over the Form of Ordination; it would be very well if you would allot some part of one first Day in each Month for that purpose. There you will be put in mind of what you have undertaken, and by a serious Examination of your Conduct, and comparing your Performances with the Promises you have made, be able to judge how well those answer these. Consider the Exhortation in the Office for ordering Priests, with that Care and Attention, which so weighty and pathetical an Admonition requires; and read over distinctly, and weigh well every Question that was asked you when you were admitted into the more immediate Service of God, and the Solemn Answers you then made to them, which you also ratified at the Holy Table, by taking the Blessed Sacrament immediately upon it; ask your selves the same Questions, changing the second person into the first, and the future time into the past.

Have I used faithful Diligence to minister the Doctrine and Sacraments, and Discipline of Christ? Have I been ready with all diligence to banish all strange Doctrines contrary to the Word of God; and to use both publick and private Monitions and Exhortations, as well to the Sick as to the Whole within my Cure? Have I been diligent in Prayer,

and reading the Scriptures, and ſuch Studies as help to the knowledge of them, &c.? Have I been diligent to frame and faſhion my ſelf and Family according to the Doctrine of Chriſt, and to make my ſelf and them, as much as in me lieth, wholſome Examples and Patterns to the Flock? And ſo of the reſt.

Examine your ſelves impartially as to theſe Matters, and if your Conſcience can truly anſwer you, that theſe things you have done, or heartily endeavour'd, according to the beſt of your Skill and Power, give the Glory of it to God, aſcribe all to his Aid and Aſſiſtance, and beg the continuance of it that you may perſevere, and *being faithful unto the Death, receive the Crown of Life.*

But if you find that you have been failing in your Duty, humbly acknowledge it to God, earneſtly beg his Pardon, reſolve upon greater Carefulneſs and Diligence for the future; think what may have been the occaſion of your failure, and what the Temptations that have drawn you from your Duty, and watch againſt them; and as the Days of this ſolemn Examination of your ſelves return, conſider what Improvements you have made ſince the laſt time, what ground you have got, and be ſtill preſſing forward, and faithfully labouring to make your ſelves and your people as good as you can.

I ſhall

I shall now apply my self to urge some Motives to engage you to a diligent and conscientious discharge of your Holy Function, in all the several Branches of it, and to a careful avoiding of every thing that may obstruct the success of the Work of the Lord in your Hands.

Some of the Topicks which I shall make use of I have hinted at already, but I shall desire your patience while I enlarge a little upon them, they being such as I hope may, through the Divine Blessing, be of some force to perswade us, *to stir up the Gift that is in us by the imposition of Hands, to take heed to our selves and to our Flocks, and to make full proof of our Ministry, that we give up our accounts with Joy, and not with Grief.* And the

First Motive I shall urge, shall be the great importance of the Work, which is committed to us. I cannot represent the weight of your Office, or greatness of the Treasure entrusted to you, in more lively or pathetical Expressions, than those by which they are set forth in the Office for ordering of Priests, where you are told, that your business is to teach and to premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord's Family, to seek for Christ's dispersed Sheep, whom he bought with his Death, that the Church and Congregation whom you serve is Christ's Spouse, and his Body, and that the End of your Ministry to these is, that they may be saved through Christ

for ever! Words so awakening, that methinks as often as we reflect upon them, they should make us tremble at the greatness of our Undertaking! of so great value are the Souls, of which we have taken the Charge, that our Lord who best understood it, thought them worth an Incarnation, worth his coming down from Heaven into this World, worth his taking our Nature upon him, worth his suffering and dying to redeem and save them; a sufficient Price for his poor despised Life, and ignominious accursed Death: And so far has he committed the Care of these Souls to us, that their everlasting Happiness or Misery does in a great measure depend upon our conscientious Discharge or wretched Neglect of our Duty to them.

Can we then think any or all the Labour and Diligence we can use in our Calling too much? Ought we not to give ourselves wholly up to our Office, as much as lies in us, to apply ourselves wholly to this one thing, and draw all our Cares and Studies this way? Especially considering,

Secondly, That our Work is not only of this great Importance, but of very great Difficulty too.

We have ourselves to look after as well as our Flocks, whom we are to lead out, and go before them in all the ways they should walk in; we must be *ensamples to them in Word and Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity.*

We muſt ſet them Patterns of Meekneſs and Humility, Patience and Self-denial, Contempt of the World, and Heavenly-mindedneſs, and all other Chriſtian Graces, which muſt ſhine forth in us with another brightneſs, than they do in others; greater degrees of Holineſs are required in us; thoſe Liberties which may be allowable in a Layman, will ill become a Clergyman; and ſuch Meaſures of Sanctity which may look well in the former, will make but a poor figure in the latter.

And when through the Grace of God working in us, we can ſay to our Flocks in St. *Paul*'s Words to the *Corinthians*, *Be ye followers of us, as we are of Chriſt*, and have made way for our Endeavours upon them, by ſhewing the good ſucceſs of them upon our ſelves, how laborious a Task have we to do our Duties to them as we ought?

I ſhall not ſpeak here of the Study and Induſtry that is requiſite to qualifie us for our Office, but of the great Care and Pains it muſt coſt us to diſcharge it duly, ſuppoſing us qualified for it.

God has ſet us in ſuch a Relation to our People, as Stewards over his Houſhold, to diſpenſe to them the Bread of Life; and though, bleſſed be his Name for it, he has made very plentiful Proviſion for his Family in his Holy Word, yet it requires no ſmall Skill or Labour to divide that Bread, the Word of Truth aright, and give every one his due

proportion

proportion. The Man of God is indeed thoroughly furniſhed for every part of his Work and Duty, in thoſe *Scriptures which are profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for inſtruction in Righteouſneſs*, and all the purpoſes of his Miniſtry, but to be able to apply them properly, he muſt take much pains, not only to get a good inſight into Humane Nature in general, but to be thoroughly acquainted with the ſtate of his own people; to underſtand their particular Tempers and Capacities, their Humours and Inclinations, their Doubts and Difficulties, their Wants and Infirmities, that ſo he may not through ignorance of their Condition or Strength, do them hurt, by applying Remedies unſuitable to their Caſe, or which they are not able to bear.

But when we have found out the Wants and Failings of our people, is it an eaſie matter to ſupply and help them? is it eaſie to inſtruct the Ignorant, and convince the Obſtinate, to perſwade the Unwilling, and reſolve the Doubtful, to awaken the Secure, and ſupport the Deſponding? Are Mens Errors and Miſtakes, their Prejudices and Paſſions, their bad Inclinations and evil Habits, ſuch gentle and yielding things? And yet theſe and many other Difficulties we muſt grapple with, muſt not be diſcouraged by any Oppoſition, but as often

ten as we are repulsed, renew the Assault with greater Vigour.

What shall we say to those Enemies without, from whom we are to save our Flocks, as well as from themselves? Is the Devil a contemptible Adversary, *who goes about like a roaring Lion, seeking which* of our poor Sheep *he may devour?* We are not surely ignorant of his Devices, but must know that much Courage and Conduct is requisite to rescue those from him that are taken captive by him at his will, and preserve others from falling into the Snare of his Temptations.

How various are the Baits with which the World entices, how tempting and alluring? How agreeable to corrupted Nature? And yet this is one of the most dangerous Enemies to be overcome by; nothing is more fatal to Souls than an inordinate and immoderate Love of the World, and the things of it. St. *John* expressly says of that Love, that *if any one love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him.* It is utterly inconsistent with the Duty and Service we owe to God. But how hard must it be to take people off from this Love, and guard them against all the Blandishments wherewith this Enemy endeavours to engage their Affections.

'Tis certain we have Objects to propose to their Affections of infinitely greater Value than any thing the World can offer; but the difficulty is to make them

them eſteem them ſo. They very well underſtand the Satisfactions of this World, they are ſenſible Objects, and they have, or may have them in preſent poſſeſſion; but 'tis no eaſie thing to give the generality of Men ſuch juſt and moving Notions of Spiritual and Intellectual Joys, as that they may prefer them before ſenſible ones; to perſwade them to *walk by Faith* rather than *Sight*, to forego viſible preſent Enjoyments, and live upon the hopes of thoſe that are inviſible and at a diſtance.

I might add further to the Difficulties of our Poſt, the watch we muſt be upon againſt ravening Wolves, both without and within the Pale of the Chriſtian Church, who will not ſpare our Flocks, but endeavour to corrupt their Faith and Principles, debauch their Morals, pervert them to Superſtition and Idolatry, or withdraw them from our Communion.

But I ſhall proceed no further upon this Head, having ſaid ſo much already, that we may well cry out, *Who is ſufficient for theſe things?* Who? My Brethren, none of us are ſufficient of ourſelves; and were this Work to be undertaken upon our own ſtrength, we ſhould ſurely, rather than preſs into the weighty and difficult Office, beg to be excuſed in the Words of *Moſes*, *O my Lord, ſend I pray thee by the hand of him whom thou wilt ſend*; And if it were not otherwiſe to be avoided, would hide

ourſelves

ourſelves with *Chryſoſtome*, or run into the Wilderneſs with *Nazianzen*.

But all the uſe we are to make of the Importance and Difficulty of our Work, is to awaken our Care and Diligence, to excite our Reſolution, and animate our Endeavours, ſince however inſufficient we are, God is All-ſufficient, and his Strength will be perfected in our Weakneſs, and this is the

Third Motive I would urge to you, the Aſſiſtance we may expect from God in the conſcientious diſcharge of our Duty.

And ſurely he that will not deny ſufficient Grace to private Chriſtians, to co-operate with their honeſt Endeavours, in working out their own Salvation, will afford to us, to whom he has committed the Care of thoſe Chriſtians, and the directing of them in the way to Salvation, Aid proportion'd to the Greatneſs of the Work in which he has employ'd us. We have our Lord's Promiſe for it in *Matth.* 28. and the laſt Verſe, where giving Commiſſion to his Apoſtles to diſciple all Nations, and admit them into his Religion, he tells them, that *he will be with them*, will protect and aſſiſt them in the diſcharge of their Office, and not them only, but will continue that Protection and Aſſiſtance to their Succeſſors, the Biſhops and Paſtors of his Church, in all ſucceeding Ages and Times, *Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the World.* This Promiſe he did per-

form to the Apoſtles, by beſtowing upon them miraculous extraordinary Gifts, ſuitable to the extraordinary Buſineſs he ſent them about, the firſt planting of Chriſtianity, and converting Infidels to it, and he will as certainly make it good to us, tho' not in the ſame extraordinary Way and Meaſure, yet in ſuch a Method and Proportion as ſhall be ſufficient for all the Ends of our Miniſtry. Let us not then be affrighted at the difficulty of the Work, God is with us, and nothing can be too hard for Omnipotence. Let us not be diſcouraged at the Obſtructions we ſhall meet with from the Dullneſs, Obſtinacy and evil Affections of thoſe we are to work upon; God can open the Heart, and enlighten the Underſtanding, incline the Will, and regulate the Affections; he can accompany his Word and Ordinances with his own Preſence and Power, and give ſucceſs to them in our Hands. Let us not be diſheartned by any oppoſition we ſhall meet with from the World, the Men of the World, or the Devil the Prince of it; for however formidable a Confederacy they may appear, yet *greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the World*; nay, let us be encourag'd by the help promis'd us, to labour with Diligence and Faithfulneſs in our Calling, and let the Importance and Difficulty be Spurs to ſtimulate and puſh us on, ſince the more important the Work, the more glorious is the Undertaking,

and

and the greater the Difficulties are, the more honourable it is to ſurmount them.

I do not ſay that the heartieſt Endeavours of the moſt zealous Paſtors ſhall always have Succeſs upon all Perſons, though aſſiſted with Divine Grace; for God will not work irreſiſtibly upon Men, and force them to be good, whether they will or not, but treat them in a way ſuitable to the Nature which he has given them, and like free Agents.

But this I do ſay, that if we do our beſt, if we diſcharge our Duty to our People with Care and Fidelity, God will ſo far aſſiſt our Endeavours, that if they are not ſucceſsful upon all, the Fault will be in them on whom they fail; and as to ourſelves, *our Labours ſhall not be in vain in the Lord*, but turn to our great account at the laſt Day.

And this brings me to the laſt Motive I ſhall preſs upon you at this time, which is drawn from

Fourthly, The Conſequences to ourſelves, that will attend our faithful Diligence or treacherous Negligence in the diſcharge of our important Office; and they will be very great one way or other. It cannot be imagin'd but our Lord, who has committed ſo great a Work to us, will make a very ſtrict enquiry into our performance of it, and moſt ſeverely puniſh thoſe who have betray'd ſo valuable a Truſt; and as bountifully reward ſuch as have through great Difficulties honeſtly executed it.

There is a dreadful Paſſage, which ought to be often in our Minds, in *Ezek.* 3. 18. where God threatens the careleſs *Watchman*, that if he neglect *to warn the wicked Man, the ſame wicked Man ſhall die in his Iniquity, but his Blood he will require at the Watchman's Hands.* And as encouraging a Paſſage we meet with in *Dan.* 12. 3. where the Prophet aſſures us, that *they that turn many to Righteouſneſs, ſhall ſhine as the Stars for ever and ever.*

Let me leave with you the account which our Lord himſelf, who has committed to us the Stewardſhip, has before-hand given of his intended procedure at the laſt Day, with the good and bad Steward in the 12th of St. *Luke.*

As for the bad, who thinks not of the Day of his Lord's coming to reckon with him, but puts it far from him, inſtead of diſpenſing to each of the Houſhold their portion of Meat in due ſeaſon, does *beat his Fellow-Servants*, inſtead of preaching the Word of Life, *reproving and exhorting with all Long-ſufferance and Doctrine*, is engag'd in uncharitable Diſputes about *fooliſh and unlearned Queſtions, and contentious Strifes, about Words to no purpoſe, but to the ſubverting of the Hearers*, inſtead of being a Pattern to them of Holineſs and Self-denial, indulges himſelf in Luxury and Riot, does *eat and drink, and is drunken*; of ſuch an one, he ſays, that his Lord *will come in a day when he looks not for him, and at an hour*

hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in ſunder, and will appoint him his portion with Unbelievers.

But for the faithful and wiſe Steward, who out of a juſt ſenſe of the weight of his Stewardſhip, and the account he muſt give of it, is careful and honeſt in the diſcharge of it, gives to every one of the Family their due, he pronounces him bleſſed, and aſſures him of a truth, that when his Lord comes, he ſhall be advanced from miniſtring as a Servant to the Houſhold, to be Ruler over all that his Lord hath.

O my Brethren, can any one think, without horror, of being ſurpriz'd with a Call to give an account of his Stewardſhip, when he cannot ſet down an Item of one Talent improv'd, or laid out in his Lord's Service, or one Soul gain'd to Chriſt, but all the whole ſtock, with which he was entruſted, buried in Idleneſs and Softneſs, or ſquander'd away in uſeleſs Diſquiſitions, or in vain Mirth and Drollery, or otherwiſe more wickedly employ'd in advancing the Devil's Intereſt, and in the mean time the poor Flock committed to his Care left to ſhift for themſelves, expos'd to the Policy and Power of their Spiritual Enemies? How will he ſink, and the ſtings of his Conſcience antedate the gnawings of the never-dying Worm, when he is ſummon'd to appear before his Judge, with the weight of other Mens Sins upon him, added to that of his own.

own Guilt? how confounded must he be, when thus charged by any of his Flock, which have been loſt through his Fault; "'Tis through thy Neg-"lect to inſtruct and warn, exhort and reprove "me, that I have dy'd in my Sins; thy unſuitable "practice made me queſtion the truth of thy Do-"ctrine, and thy wicked Example led me into the "way of Perdition.

On the other ſide, what an inward Satisfaction and Joy does that faithful Paſtor continually feel, that wholly gives himſelf up to promote the Service of his Maſter, and the good of Souls? Eſpecially *when the time of his departure is at hand*; What a *rejoycing* to him *is the teſtimony of his Conſcience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with fleſhly Wiſdom, but by the grace of God, he has had his Converſation in the World*, and more eſpecially towards the people committed to him; that he is *clear from the Blood of all Men*, that *he has renounced the hidden things of Diſhoneſty, not walking in Craftineſs, or handling the Word of God deceitfully, but by Manifeſtation of the Truth, commending himſelf to every Man's Conſcience in the ſight of God.* O comfortable Reflection! O raviſhing Proſpect! when he can ſay, *I have fought the good Fight, I have finiſh'd my Courſe, I have kept the Faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteouſneſs, which the Lord the righteous Judge ſhall give me at that Day.* With what humble Confidence will

he

he then appear, and apply himſelf to his Judge, with a *Behold, Lord, here am I, and the Children which thou haſt given me!* thoſe, whom through thy Grace aſſiſting the meaneſt of thy Servants, I have been inſtrumental in begetting again to thee; then ſhall he receive a beautiful Crown from the Hands of the chief Paſtor, a Crown of Glory that fades not away.

Let theſe things, my Brethren, ſink into your Hearts; and conſider them with that Serioufneſs and Application, which Matters of this Moment deſerve; and then tell me, ſince ſuch is the importance of the Work committed to us, ſuch the Difficulties of it, and ſuch the Conſequences to ourſelves of our performing or not performing it, whether it will not, not only employ all the Care and Time of each of us in particular, but require the joint Endeavours of us all, and our mutual Aſſiſtances to carry on the buſineſs of our common Lord.

I aſſure you, my Brethren, of the beſt help that I am able to give to any of you, and I promiſe myſelf the return of the like aſſiſtance from you all; to which End, *I beſeech you, mark thoſe that would cauſe Diviſions amongſt us, and Offences contrary to the Chriſtian Doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them; for they that are ſuch ſerve not our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, but ſome ill Ends of their own; and however *zealouſly they may ſeem to affect you, they affect you not well.* We know who they were that promoted the firſt Sepa-

rations

ration from our Eſtabliſh'd Church, and have been ever ſince the Reformation induſtriouſly fomenting Schiſms and Factions among us; and I know no Intereſt that can be ſerv'd but theirs, by raiſing new Diſtinctions and Diviſions now; it is their Policy to break us into Parties, and ſet each Party againſt, and make it fall foul upon the other; by which we do not only weaken ourſelves, but our Eyes being diverted from them, and intent only upon one another, we give them opportunity of carrying on their Deſigns unobſerved againſt us all.

One would think 'tis not ſo long ſince they had like to have gain'd their Ends upon us to our utter Ruin, that we ſhould ſo ſoon fall into their Meaſures again; and yet ſo great and ſo ſucceſsful have their Policy and Induſtry been, that Churchmen have been prevail'd upon to fall out with Churchmen, and to carry on their Diſputes with them, in a manner very unbecoming Chriſtians or Men, even to ſuch a height, as to exclude them from the Name of Churchmen. Indeed, according to ſome Mens Doctrine, it is one of the hardeſt things that can be, to tell what a Churchman ſignifies.

To believe and profeſs all the Doctrines of our Church, all her Articles of Faith, to endeavour to obſerve her Rules of Practice, to conform and ſubmit to her Diſcipline, to joyn in her Worſhip,

to

to keep constantly Communion with them in all her Holy Offices and Administrations, without ever seeming separating from her, is not, in some persons Opinions, enough (to denominate a Man a Church-man, at most, will give him but the Character of a Low one: Nay, this unhappy distinction of High and Low is apply'd to the Pastors and Governours of the Church!

My Brethren, if there be any that minister in Holy Things in our Church, who are not zealously affected to her Constitution, or would not most heartily promote her Interest, I could with in the Apostle's sense, *that they were even cut off*: not only put out of the Posts they unworthily fill in Her, but even cut off from her Communion. But to fix odious Marks of Distinction on those, to whose Publick Characters Esteem and Obedience are due by the Rules of Christianity, and whose Personal Characters for their brave appearing in defence of our Church in Times of greatest Danger, and learned vindicating of our Constitution against our Enemies, on all hands should intitle them to another sort of Treatment from all that wish well to our establish'd Religion, to represent such as not hearty Friends to the Church, but rather Betrayers of Her, is no light thing, nor will be found so one day. And surely, it will be no very justifiable ground for any to do this upon, because they dif-

far from them in Opinion above Matters of a Political Conſideration.

I would touch this Sore with a ſoft and compaſſionate Hand, would not do any thing to hurt, but all I could to heal it. I think I could truly ſay for my own part, as St. *Clement* exhorts the Corinthians to ſay in his firſt Epiſtle to them, Ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ ὑμᾶς καὶ ἐμαυτὸν συγχωρῶ ἀπροσκόπους εἶναι τῷ ἁγίῳ θελήματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ εὑρεθῆναι.

And I hope we are all ready to ſacrifice any of our private Intereſts to the Peace of the Church.

For the Lord's ſake conſider of what fatal Conſequence the violent and uncharitable Contentions of Clergymen, of thoſe eſpecially who are of the ſame Church, muſt be to the Chriſtian Religion, and to our Church in particular.

We have Enemies enough to require our united Force to oppoſe them; Atheiſts, Deiſts, Papiſts, Socinians, Free-thinkers, Sectaries of various Denominations; againſt theſe let us turn our Weapons, and no longer employ them againſt one another.

To conclude, let me beſeech you in the pathetical Words of St. *Paul* to the *Philippians*, *If there be any Conſolation in Chriſt, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies, fulfil ye my Joy, that ye be like minded, having the ſame Love, being of one accord, of one Mind, let nothing be done through Strife*

Strife or Vainglory, but in lowliness of Mind, let each esteem other better than themselves.

Let us lay aside all Prejudices, and unreasonable Jealousies of one another, and *contend earnestly together for the Faith that was once delivered to the Saints*; and let the only Strife among us be, who shall be most zealous in carrying on the Work of our Master, and the Interests of Souls, and most helpful and beneficial to one another.

Blessed are those Servants, whom their Lord when he comes shall find so doing.

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